

Europcar capitalises on World Cup upgrades

Europcar has seen comprehensive branch, depot and IT improvements as a sustainable legacy from the World Cup and an effective means for the company's growth strategy to be realised.



Branch upgrades

New branches at Cape Town International Airport (R3.5 million) and King Shaka International Airport (R5 million) have doubled the size of the facilities that previously existed in these two cities. Features of these new branches also include much larger kiosks and parking areas.

In Sandton, the company will have five branches once its current expansion programme is completed. This includes two new branches located at the Sandton Eye and opposite the Gautrain station. A new kiosk will be opening on Sandton's Gautrain platform on 1 November 2010. In addition, it has signed a parking lease agreement for parking opposite the Gautrain station. Its facility at the Gautrain station in Sandton is open until 9pm every day.

Depot upgrades

After investing around R30 million in a 22 000m² depot at King Shaka International Airport in May, Europcar has opened another three depots in 2010 - Port Elizabeth, 7000m²; George, 5000m²; and Nelspruit, 2000m².

"Significantly, our new depots are all state-of-the-art facilities that are also extremely environmentally efficient," said Dawn Nathan-Jones, CEO of Europcar South Africa. "It is important to note that our existing depots have been modified to mirror the efficiency of the new depots."

As an environmentally responsible business, it was imperative that depots also be equipped with motion sensors and energy saving light fittings. Car maintenance, from servicing to panel beating, changing of tyres and replacement of glass, is done on-site to ensure that vehicles are turned around as quickly as possible to achieve maximum utilisation.

In line with King Shaka International Airport's nature conservation rules, its new depot at this airport has not been painted, but treated with natural materials instead.

Perhaps, the most important environmental initiative is the introduction of a water recycling plant at all depots. These plants

provide a simple, sustainable and environmentally responsible solution for the recovery and cleaning of wash-bay water, resulting in a dramatic reduction in water consumption.

The 'e-washa' system focus on recycling water through rain harvesting and utilises a natural biological process that breaks down soap and grease in used wash-bay water.

IT upgrades

IT/IS innovation is ongoing, with the World Cup being a mere catalyst in continuous improvement. The renewal of back-end server infrastructure, started in March 2010, has given the company the confidence of full business continuity going forward. Using virtualisation server technology, high availability and replication of data storage and processors off-site was achieved, providing the well-timed edge to deal with unexpected system failures over the World Cup 'rush.' Its key branches were set-up with printers, scanners and computers of a reputable global brand, backed-up by quality servicing with 24-hour on-site response.

Europcar South Africa's networks - both WAN & LAN - were upgraded to cope with the transactional peaks and a broadband back up in the event of a network glitch. Technology as an enabler to maintain a seamless operation was seen as a challenge, but became a triumph with a success rate equivalent to 99% being achieved.

In parallel, the company continued to drive reduction in paper transactions and in some instances eliminated paper altogether.

"Information technology is critical in our quest to be more environmentally friendly; after all, we are the green car rental company. Many initiatives towards a more environmentally responsible environment are already underway," says Nathan-Jones.

"In addition to our continued responses to the day-to-day demands arising from an exponentially growing digital and e-commerce society, we will be embarking on many initiatives to re-design and re-invent ourselves, optimising the potential of technology in a people-orientated company. We see technology as an enabler towards us being able to deliver excellent customer service with a personal touch," she concludes.

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